

FOSTER STARS/ADOPT STARS PROGRAM

Foster STARS/Adopt STARS (Specialized Training Assessment Resources and Support/Skills) is a comprehensive recruitment/training/assessment program. STARS is based on the recognition that children entering out-of-home care today have the right to be cared for by a placement provider who has been properly trained and possesses the skills and competencies necessary to meet the child's needs for safety and security, while continuing family relationships and working toward permanency.

Individuals interested in becoming a licensed foster home for a non-related child for the agency are required to participate in the 27 hours of pre-service training. The curriculum is nine weeks of training in three-hour blocks of time. Each of the nine training sessions covers topics and information that tie into the role of foster parenting and working with the agency. The curriculum has been developed by Child Welfare League of America, (CWLA), and the competencies that are identified to care for children in out-of-home care due to abuse and neglect include:

- Protecting and nurturing children;
- Meeting children's developmental needs and addressing developmental delays;
- Supporting relationships between children and their families;
- Connecting children to safe, nurturing relationships intended to last a lifetime; and
- Working as a member of a professional team

During the nine weeks of training, the family is also working closely with an agency staff person or a contracted provider to complete the necessary home assessment. The in-home consultations are purposely held at specific intervals, which correlate with the above competencies covered in the training sessions. The average length of time devoted to the in-home consultations to meet with the family members is ten hours.

Foster/kinship caregivers may complete STARS Training for the Caregiver Who Knows the Child. This is a curriculum that was developed specially for agency arranged kinship providers. The family, in the form of a self-study, may complete the training or the family may participate in a group-training program. This training module is comparable with the Foster/Adopt STARS training module, addressing the same competencies. Kinship providers must meet the same five identified competencies in order to meet licensing requirements.

Foster/kinship parent applicants who successfully complete the pre-service process of participating in the STARS training and meeting the program

competencies are licensed as Professional Parents and receive an additional (maintenance reimbursement) incentive payment of \$100 per month per child. For individuals interested in adoption they must complete the required 27 hours of pre-service STARS training and the assessment component, as well as participate in an additional 12 hours of Spaulding Adoption Training. Individuals will have an adoption assessment completed following the Spaulding Training, which addresses the additional competencies required for adopting a special needs child through our agency. Those competencies are:

- Know how adoptive families are different
- Understand the importance of separation, loss and grief in adoption
- Understand attachment and its importance in adoption
- Understand the need to anticipate challenges and be able to identify strategies for managing the challenges as an adoptive family
- Understand that adoption means making a life long commitment to a child

The home assessment for foster care, kinship care, and adoption all include the agency requirements of a child abuse and neglect check and criminal records check for all adult household members, medical forms from a physician on all household members, a home safety check, personal and employment references for the adult caretakers, and school references for children in the home.

Effective January 2004 resource families were required to submit fingerprints for the purpose of state and federal criminal record checks; this requirement is to be completed at the time of application and re-licensure. Division and contracted staff received training from the Missouri State Highway Patrol so staff could fingerprint applicants at the local Children's Division offices as well as during STARS training classes. The Missouri State Highway Patrol (MSHP) is awarding contracts for electronic scanning of fingerprints. These contracts will make electronic fingerprint scanning available across the state. This process should reduce the number of fingerprint rejections and decrease the time in obtaining background results.